



## PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE AND ASSOCIATION OF MAN WITH ENVIRONMENT: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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### **Abstract**

*Environment and the organisms are two dynamic and complex components of nature. Environment regulates the life of the organisms including human beings. Human beings interact with the environment more vigorously than other living beings. Everything that affects us during our lifetime is collectively known as environment. The environment in which we live and work affects our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Our environment refers to those things or agencies which though distinct from us, affect our life or activity. The environment by which man is surrounded and affected is also dependant on the activities of man in maintaining its vitality and ecological balance. Factors present in the environment which may be natural, artificial, social, biological and psychological affects the physical and psychological growth and adjustment of man. These factors together determine the specific behaviour of an individual in a specific situation. It has been hypothesized that environment influences behavior at several levels. Immediate behavior is a function of the settings in which it occurs. For example, the arrangement of furniture in a room influences the way in which people in the room interact. This paper reflects the relationship of man with environment from psychological point of view which emphasizes that man not only acts as a physical component of the environment but also psychologically associated with his immediate surroundings, hence dependant.*

**Keywords- Environment, Human Behaviour, Interrelation, Psychological Dependence.**

### **Introduction**

The earliest noteworthy discoveries for studying the dependence of man on environment can be traced dated back to Roger Barker who created the field of ecological psychology. Founding a research station in Oskaloosa, Kansas in 1947 from his field observations expanded into the theory that social settings influence behavior. Empirical data gathered in Oskaloosa from 1947 to 1972 later on helped him develop the concept of the “behavior setting” to help explain the relationship between the individual and the immediate environment from psychological approach.

Now-a-days the word environment is often being used by almost all people around us, on television and in newspapers. Everyone is speaking about the protection and preservation of environment. Global summits are being held regularly to discuss environmental issues. During the last hundred years, the mutual relationship among environment, social organization and culture has been discussed in sociology, anthropology and geography. All this shows the increasing importance of environment. Besides, it is a fact that life is tied with the environment.

The term environment has been derived from a French word “Environia” means to surround. It refers to both abiotic (physical or non-living) and biotic (living) environment. Environment literally means Surrounding in which we are living. It includes all those things on which we are directly or indirectly dependent for our survival, whether it is living component like animals, plants or non living component like soil, air water.

- According to P. Gisber, “Environment is anything immediately surrounding an object and exerting a direct influence on it.”
- According to E. J. Ross “Environment is an external force which influences us.”
- Environmental Protection Act (1986) defined “Environment as the sum total of water, air and land, their interrelationship among themselves and with the human beings, other living beings and property.”

Thus, environment refers to anything that is immediately surrounds an individual, a group of individual or complex socio-cultural set up. It exerts a direct influence on the physical and psychological fields of the individual.

### **Interrelation between Man and Environment**

The relationship of man and environment is can be termed as “Bi-Directional”. That is, human beings are affected by the environment and they also affect the environment. This reciprocal relationship deals with two-way process in which environment influences human behaviours and human beings affect environment. Environmental awareness, education for conservation of environment, appreciation of nature, all depends on psychological field or life space of human beings; hence study of man-environment from behavioral and psychological point of view holds utmost importance. The personality make-up of people of a country is shaped by the nature and type of environment in which they live. In unnatural or caged conditions animals show ‘behavior starvation’ and their behavior breaks down so as human beings when removed from



natural environment. Studies show that population stress and the artificial character of urban conditions is the central reason for the increased rates of crime and incidence of mental disorders of people living in urban areas.

### **Environment as Decider of Human Behaviour**

The influence of environment can be assessed in terms of psychology or behaviour. We know that physical environment directly or indirectly affects our behaviour. Human perception is the basic element for active process of adjustment and behavioral reaction to any situation. Environmental perception or perception developed in the mind about surroundings is derived from factual experience and serves as directive to human activities. Organization of cognitive maps through interaction with environment thus shapes human behaviour. For example, it has been observed that people become more irritable and aggressive when the weather is hot and humid, in comparison to cold weather. Interest in environmental variables and its inter relation with human behaviour has led to the development of a field known as Environmental Psychology. This field of psychology is dedicated to the study of reciprocal relationships between psychological processes and physical environments, both natural and man made

### **Environment for Making Decision**

It is the environment where rational human beings learn to take decision. Environmental situations sometimes enforces man to take decision against his will such as in time of natural disaster man has to dominate his power of decision making on the issues of rich living, enhancing salary or other decisions like that as life saving becomes primary important and he becomes more concerned about such decision that helps to provide security of life and property. In other words, environment is the major factor that affects decision making power. Man has to take decision considering his immediate environment. Decisions taken by man whether translated into action or not are influenced by environmental factors.

### **Behaviour in Social Environment**

Social environment is one of the components of environment. It's a kind of environment created by a group of individual where an individual resides. The socio-cultural environment includes the aspects of social interaction including its products such as beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes, etc. The material and non-material aspects of environment are included in it. It is society that turns a man into a productive member of society. Society sets rules, values, norms that the members abide by while behaving.

### **Lewin'S Field Theory and Interaction of Psychological and Physical Environment**

Kurt Lewin, a German Psychologist, differentiated between physical environment and psychological environment. Lewin has introduced the concept of life space to explain the relationship between person and environment. According to Lewin, life space is the whole psychological reality that determines the behaviour of an individual.

Life space (L) includes everything present in the environment (E) that influences an individual's behaviour. The environment (E) contains everything outside the person (P), including physical, psychological, and social aspects. Lewin calls the person (P) in the environment (E) as life space. Mathematically, life space can be described as:

$$B = f(L) = f(P.E)$$

That is behaviour of an individual at a particular time is a function of life space, which contains the person (P) and environment (E). The environment (E) in the life space influences individual's behaviour and other physical environment that does not directly influence behaviour that is called Foreign hull.

### **Psychological Association of Man with Environmental Past**

As a person interacts with various places and spaces, he/she is able to evaluate which properties in different environments fulfill his/her various needs. When a place contains components that satisfy a person biologically, socially, psychologically and/or culturally, it creates the environmental past of a person. Through 'good' or 'bad' experiences with a place, a person is then able to reflect and define their personal values, attitudes, feelings and beliefs about the physical world.

### **Environment for Development of Personality**

Personality is developed by genetic and environmental factors. The personality structure of citizens in any country is bound to be shaped by the nature and type of environment in which they live though role of heredity in this regard is dominant. Applied Environmental Psychology attempts to provide norms for better management of the environment for better life and personality development. It studies effective ways of promoting conservation of the natural environment and better ways of designing buildings, towns and cities, taking into consideration the behavioral needs and responses of people. Racial differences in personality can to a large extent be traced to the influence of different environments to which people of different races have been subjected for generations (Moos 1976)



### **Environmental Factors as Cause of Mental Disorder**

Every animal is at home in its natural environment and in unnatural settings, its behavior becomes deranged. It has been shown that animals have behavior needs related to their natural habitats. For example, a polar bear which catches fish has the need to perform the movements involved in catching fish. In captivity, if the bear is deprived of the opportunity to satisfy this need, it will exhibit symptoms of behavior starvation, even though it is given enough food. Many caged animals show symptoms of abnormal behavior like compulsions. Increase in population density beyond the optimum point is also part of alteration of the environment and this leads to population stress causing aggression and breakdown of behavior.

Population stress and the artificial character of urban conditions are supposed to be the reasons for the increased rates of crime and incidence of mental disorders of people living in urban areas. Negative Environment of home, school, society is considered to be one of the major contributing factors in development of mental illness. The hostile and scarce environment makes people aggressive and aggressiveness necessitates artificial moral control. People in such environments develop linear intelligence and they become practical, their approach to the environment being characterized by one of aggression, competition, exploitation and manipulation. It is said that science and technology are the result of this kind of approach to the environment.

Instinctual behavior patterns of human beings also seem to break down under artificial and overpopulated urban conditions. It has been shown that the incidence of mental illness increases with urbanization. The highest incidence of schizophrenia is at the center of cities. Only about one fifth of the population of big cities seems to be relatively free from debilitating symptoms of pathology. Crime rates in big cities are increasing at an alarmingly high rate and many of the major cities of the world have come to be known as crime cities.

### **Evolution of Man and Environment**

Evolution theory of human put forwarded by Darwin also supports environmental impact on human behaviour. Evolution according to Darwin is the result of struggle and modification of physical and psychological features of man to adjust with changing environmental conditions.

### **Concept of Place Identity and Man**

For many years Harold Proshansky and his colleagues at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, explored the concept of place identity. Place identity has been traditionally defined as a 'sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives'. These cognitions define the daily experiences of every human being. Through one's attitudes, feelings, ideas, memories, personal values and preferences toward the range and type of physical settings, he/she can then understand the environment they live in and their overall experience.

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### **Environmental Consciousness of Brain**

Leanne Rivlin theorized that one way to examine an individual's environmental consciousness is to recognize how the physical place is significant, and look at the people/place relationship. Environmental cognition (involved in human cognition) plays a crucial role in environmental perception. All different areas of the brain engage with environmentally relevant information. Some believe that the orbitofrontal cortex integrates environmentally relevant information from many distributed areas of the brain. Due to its anterior location within the frontal cortex, the orbitofrontal cortex may make judgments about the environment, and refine the organism's "understanding" through error analysis, and other processes specific to prefrontal cortex.

### **Emergence of Environmental Psychology**

Environmental Psychology as a branch of scientific thinking took shape during the 1960s and 'Environmental Psychology and Population' has been included as a division of the American Psychological Association. Environmental Psychology as a discipline deals with behavior in relation to the environment. Concepts regarding the environment and aesthetic preferences are studied and represented in behavioral maps. The importance of the field has increased in recent years owing to the increased concern with the environment resulting from the pollution problems, problems posed by population explosion, depletion of natural resources and the felt need to conserve wilderness.



Physical environment studied in relation to behavior in Environmental Psychology includes material objects, plants, animals and human beings. Environmental Psychology does not emphasize the interactional processes among people, which form the subject matter of other branches of Psychology. Environmental Psychology follows the systems approach which has become the modern approach in several branches of science. It is holistic and naturalistic and studies the adaptation of organisms to their settings. Organisms are studied as part of the ecosystem, stressing the balance and interdependence of organisms and the environment.

### **Importance of Human Behavior for Environmental Protection**

It is acknowledged by all that Man is destroyer of Environment. United Nations is working seriously to control the harmful activities of people affecting our environment around the world. Environment is a naturally given capital having certain limits and we have to learn to use the resources judiciously.

Air, water, food, fuel, etc. are all gifts of this environment to the human kind and we have to learn to judiciously use and conserve them. We have to pay greater attention to conserve water and air. Disposal of waste material we produce, ranging from sewage to garbage needs special attentions.

If we take example natural resources that we are not replenishing like water, our planet, there are now at least 80 countries having serious water shortage with serious threat to agriculture. India is one among these countries where water shortage is adversely affecting the agriculture. The water shortage in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is an example. The water shortage is assuming serious threat to the big cities also. For example, during the summer months there is serious shortage of water in Delhi region and due to population influx from the neighbouring cities the problem is getting worse day-by-day. The solution lies in bringing changes in behavior of human that harvesting rain water, efforts to use rain water to augment water supply and wise use of water get importance.

When we take example of waste material, perhaps the most obvious by- product of human activity is waste material we produce affecting environment negatively. This waste product of our activity ranges from sewage to garbage. The disposal of the garbage, especially of non-bio-degradable material (e.g., plastic bags) that we use even after so much concern and ban over using plastic bags worsens the situation. Each and everyone must take care not to use such material, like plastic bags for daily use. Recycling the waste should be undertaken to save the land from the polluting effects of such garbage. Change in Individual behaviour is pre-requisite for making broad group or government efforts successful for protection of environment.

### **Suggestion and Conclusion**

Ancient Indian sculptures are greatest believers of man- environment relationship from psychological terms. For example, cold climate presumably makes people 'Rajasik'. The possibility of freezing induces insecurity and in a cold place one has to keep working to warm up the body. People in a cold region have to plan ahead, hoard food and firewood and make warm clothes and footwear for winter. In contrast, people in a very warm climate are likely to be 'Thamasik'. This kind of temperament is characterized by laziness and inertia. In a very hot place, it is unpleasant to keep working, because of perspiration and fatigue. This kind of climate makes for an attitude of surrender and the approach to the environment is marked by fear and superstition.

The moderate climate is most conducive for the 'Sathwik' temperament. This is characterized by an awareness of oneself and the relationship of the environment to one's adjustment. Consequently the Sathwik approach involves living in harmony with the environment. The insight into the role of the environment in our well being leads to a felt need to conserve the natural environment. The Sathwik temperament is holistic, intuitive and well balanced.

Hence, man's behaviour is affected by his surroundings and things included in the immediate setting. Environment affects man through, biophysical factors, behavioral controls and through natural resources. Survival and functioning of human body depends on environmental conditions like heat, light, humidity, oxygen, water, wind, cloud, lighting etc. Sun is the central source of power for human beings.

In present time, effects of human activities on environment is the topic of discussion everywhere for increasing man-made disasters, environmental pollution and population explosion and threats to environment resulting from man's activities. Efforts should be made to make people aware of the inter-relation of man and environment as solution of environmental problems greatly depends on realization and appreciation of aesthetic and psychological dependence of human beings on environment.



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